

University College
Office of Teaching and Learning –Teaching and Learning Week

Q: How can you help students connect to new knowledge by connecting with each other?

A: Pair and Share Activities!

Objective: _____

“Pair and share” is one type of learning model under the umbrella of “learning by teaching.” These models—which places students into pairs, teams, or groups in order for them to learn from one another—are supported by many theories of collaborative and cooperative learning, including social constructivist theories (Mitchell and Sackney, 2000; Van Aswegen, Fraser, Nortje, Slabbert, Kaske, 1993; Wenger,1998). In these activities, students are able to construct knowledge together and come to a shared meaning of these concepts, in ways that are more conducive to learning. Encouraging students to assume the teaching role allows learners to connect more readily to their own prior knowledge to promote and nurture meaningful and effective learning (Deer and Wolfe, 2001). In turn, this can be a source of motivation to learn (Shor and Freire, 1987), creating a cycle of interest in learning.

Advantages to “learning by teaching” models:

- Draws on collective contributions of all participants, involving them on an emotional level
- Fosters active participation and cooperation in learning
- Fulfills human social need for interaction
- Allows for flexibility and group ownership of the learning process
- Boosts students’ self-directed/self-study skills, increasing motivation to learn on their own
- Results in higher-level thinking due to the immediate connection to one’s prior knowledge
- Creates easier recall, and thus lasting memory of concepts

Challenges:

- Time-consuming
- Can bring about disagreement/conflict among participants
- Corrective feedback may be more difficult to provide
- Culture-based stylistic communication differences

Potential Ways to Engage Learning by Teaching Models

- Assign one student as the expert, and the other as the learner; next time, they switch roles. Since you have one “expert” in each group, each pair can be reading the same article, discussing the same concept, etc.
- If you know who your stronger and more challenged students are, you can pre-assign the pairs so that the stronger student is the “expert” (Tip: Keep that information to yourself, however).
- Break students into groups. Invite a colleague from another discipline to offer expertise to each group. Rotate so that each group is exposed to the different discipline’s perspective of that item. Appoint one student the facilitator to lead discussion among that group about lessons learned from the new perspective.
 - Note: The group facilitator can also lead this discussion on a Canvas discussion board.
- Assign the same article, case study, paragraph, etc. to be read by the entire class. Assign pairs and ask one student to take the “pro” stance and the other student to take the “con” stance.

Ask them to debate in pairs. Task them with capturing their best arguments on paper to share with the class.

- Note: This works online. E.g., you can have a “Twitter-off” in which students debate via Twitter feeds.
- If you have a writing assignment, assign peer review assignments. These are best done in smaller batches (i.e., portions of a written assignment rather than the whole assignment). Be sure to give students a directed task and specific things to look for.
- “Muddiest Point”: Place students in pairs or trios and ask them to discuss amongst themselves what concept(s) from that day’s lecture/discussion are they still confused or unclear about. Ask them to share aloud or capture these on paper to turn in.
 - Note: This works online by asking them to post their “muddiest points” on a Canvas discussion board.

How I could apply this in my classroom:

References & Resources

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Shor, Ira, and Paulo Freire. 1987. “What is the “DIALOGICAL METHOD” of Teaching?” *The Journal of Education* 169, no. 3: 11-31.

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Wenger, Etienne. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Notes:

Michelle and Ali Presentation Notes:

1. Ask them to pair up.
2. Hand each pair a worksheet
3. Ask them to read the initial paragraph and discuss the challenges and opportunities for using this technique in their own classrooms.
4. Debrief:
 - What were some of the challenges you identified?
 - What were some of the opportunities you identified?
5. Talk through with them the other examples from the worksheet of ways to engage this model.
6. How might you use this in your own classrooms?
7. [If time} What questions or concerns do you still have?